

Agassiz Neighborhood Study Committee
Harvard Presentation - April 10, 2001

AGASSIZ STUDY COMMITTEE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Neighborhood Study Committee: Joel Bard, Amy Barad, Debby Galef,
Miriam Goldberg, Ross Hoffman,
Fred Meyer, Dave Wood

Community Development Department: Venita Mathias

Harvard University: Travis McCready, Kathy Spiegelman

Kathy Spiegelman, Associate Vice President, Harvard University Planning and Real Estate Office gave an overview of the university's 2000 Town/Gown report.

University evolution

The University's evolution accompanied the evolution of the City of Cambridge. The town/gown relationship, both compatibility and conflict, has existed since the beginning of the City's inception as Newtowne in the 17th century. A comparison of a city map in 1860 and one in 1997 reveals a history of the city's growth expanding out from where the University core was around Harvard Square in the middle of the 19th century.

University demographics

- 6,680 undergraduates
- 7700 graduate students enrolled in the schools in Cambridge
- 18,000 at the extension school
- 1300 full-time equivalent faculty in Cambridge
- 7200 staff
- nearly 25% of university employees live in Cambridge

University culture

Harvard museums

The university museums are a cultural amenity to the community. They are teaching museums. The Natural History and Peabody museums are primarily frequented by school children. They are the basic users of the collections.

Commercial character

Harvard has had a good relationship with the Harvard Square Defense Fund because a lot of the university's activities encourage smaller stores with long tenancies and very few chain stores.

University diversity

The student population is very diverse from all over the world with diverse backgrounds. International students make up one-third of the graduate student population.

Harvard's Mission

The core of what generates most of the growth and change on the Harvard campus is directly related to the university's academic mission. The university defines itself as a place that encourages students and faculty in the pursuit of excellence.

Mission description

- teaching the next generation of leaders
- promoting and expanding knowledge through research
- serving society through achieving

The university is always trying to be excellent in all three areas, which means there is a constant reexamination that frequently results in a pattern of growth.

Sustainability is also a component of Harvard's planning for growth and change. In particular, the Capital Campaign in the early 90s was deliberately set to be a higher goal than had ever been set before. The university believed that securing its' financial future was the only assurance of sustainability for the mission and the enterprise. The idea of the campaign was to enhance the endowment so that Harvard could sustain the kind of change it feels it needs to keep up with the competition and to offer the quality education that the departments and different schools strive to offer.

Institutional priorities set during the Capital Campaign

- improving the quality of student life

- making faculty appointments to get a better teacher/student ratio in many of the departments and schools
- information, technology, and the sciences
- executive education and distance learning
- international initiatives - The Center for Government and International Studies designed by Harry Cobb in New York. There has been a current effort to bring architects from outside the City and the country to look at the campus and try and figure out the best designs for the 21st century. Community input brought about the decision to preserve existing green space around several very distinguished Greek Revival houses that the university agreed were important and a shared Harvard/community value. The current redesign has the buildings pulled back from the street in a considerable way having less impact on adjacent properties. Permits are still pending on the project.
- libraries - (Widener library is currently undergoing renovations)

University facilities

From the very beginning, Harvard's first construction activity involved a collection of multi-use residential and academic buildings, classroom, library, and dormitory. The quadrangle was deliberately left open to the Town Square as opposed to a closed cloister.

Today, Harvard's physical plant is 12.3 million gross square feet on 206 acres. Nearly 70 % is open meaning it doesn't have buildings on it (includes surface parking lots).

Harvard housing

- Forty percent of the physical plant in Cambridge is residential.
- The University houses almost all undergraduates in the river houses and other dormitories.
- The university houses more than a third of the graduate students.

Housing has been a serious issue at the university. There has been a lot of discussion about housing supply at the city council and in the press. The question is where are there places to build dormitories? How can the university build housing that students can afford? Unless a school has dorm rooms, they depend on Harvard Planning and Real Estate's supply of affiliate housing like Terry Terrace on Everett Street. If the university is going to house more graduate students, Planning and Real Estate is going to have to find a way to supply the housing. The university is building graduate student apartments at One Western Avenue in Allston.

Land transactions

In the 1970s, the university acquired a considerable amount of property and, in the 1990's sold a lot of property. A lot of the small houses the university acquired before rent control and hung onto during rent control, were not appropriate for institutional uses. Prior to the 1970s, a lot of

the properties were converted to non-residential use and some of them were torn down. Since rent control's demise, the university has sold a lot of properties to individual owners. One hundred units were purchased by the City of Cambridge.

In 1975, the university put out a publication called the planning inventory. It was a study of where the university might want to do development. It included a line around an area where the university was defining its campus. Some of the area was property the university owned and some it didn't own. It became known as the red line and the university was asked to commit to not purchasing residential property outside of that red line. The university made a ten-year commitment (which expired in the late 1980s) and has not violated the notion of buying residential property outside that red line.

Ninety-five percent of the building square footage on Harvard's campus was built in the 20th century. Although growth varied considerably from decade to decade depending on what was going on, it averaged about a million and a half square feet a decade. In the 80s and 90s together while the campaign was raising money but not a lot of building activity was going on, the two decades combined produced about that million and a half square feet of acquisition and construction. In addition to the money coming in from the campaign and any new initiatives that go with it, there is a pent up pattern of space needs that is informing Harvard's future plans.

The physical character at the university reflects a lot about the culture and values of the activities. There are a lot of different architectural styles that came out of the period in which they were built. There is a lot of dedicated attention to open space, in particular, pedestrian circulation through open space. Harvard Yard is very characteristic of the landscape environment in which the various Harvard buildings sit and are utilized. The edge in Harvard Square has a lot of pedestrian activity back and forth. The John Harvard statue gets a phenomenal amount of visitors. It is the second most visited location in the Boston area.

Campus organization

The way the campus is organized creates significant growth challenges in specific programs. The campus is developed as academic precincts. For instance, the Education School in Harvard Square at the edge of the Radcliffe Yard has not been able to grow for a very long time. An existing parking lot that could be redeveloped in the North Yard does very little to help the Graduate School of Education's growth problems because they want contiguity and they have their own precinct. The different schools in the university see themselves as based in different areas. One of the university's challenges is getting schools to see the land acquired across the river as an opportunity for growth.

The system of decentralization at Harvard is referred to as ETOB, Every Tub On its Own Bottom. Meaning each school has its own shares of endowment and its own Dean with a lot of discretion who is considered the head of a tub. The tub system means that each one of the schools does its own academic and physical planning. Harvard's tub system doesn't have a tub for housing.

University development in Agassiz neighborhood

The North Yard (north of Harvard Yard) is the part of campus closest to the Agassiz neighborhood. Projects underway or being considered:

- The Science Center has a renovation and a proposed addition on the Oxford Street side of the building; an addition on top of the footprint that already exists.
- The Government Department is going to move out of Littauer and move into the new Center for Government and International Studies/Knafel. When they do, Littauer will be renovated for the exclusive use of the Economics Department.
- The Law School has looked at placing the Everett Street garage underground to free up a potential development opportunity above grade.
- The community has requested that redevelopment of the old Bence pharmacy site have a retail component. One possibility is to add retail up at North Hall and have the Bence pharmacy site less active for retail.
- Renovations are planned for the museum
- Andover Library is currently under construction.
- Hammond Street transitional zoning - A proposed system of open spaces around which the institutional buildings would be organized and then connected to the edge as developed under the transitional zoning guidelines. The massing and urban design proposal was described and developed by Dennis Carlone who has done work for Lesley College and the City of Cambridge.
- Palfrey House will be turned around to face Hammond Street
- 60 Oxford Street building
- Proposed parking garage: total zoning square footage might be over a million square feet. That number does not take into account edge conditions, transitional zoning currently being worked out, historical buildings that are not going to be displaced. 600 spaces are currently allowed. One thought is to create a central underground surface area with a coordinated point of entry for truck traffic and deliveries.
- Cyclotron building will eventually come down. A study is being conducted for a biological science wet lab building that would possibly be located on this site.

Long term planning

Harvard has spent over a decade acquiring land in Allston. The physical constraint that exists in the middle of the City of Cambridge where Harvard is located suggests that Harvard's future cannot be accommodated on the land available to the university in Cambridge. The land the university owns in Allston is greater in size than in the City of Cambridge. The major property is the turnpike landing area that is now truck yards. The university has less than 5 million square feet of building on land it owns in Allston. The university's future is going to include building and

development of property it owns in Allston. However, a lot of that property stays encumbered or in some other way not ready to be built on. There is a great opportunity to create a sense of place and a neighborhood.